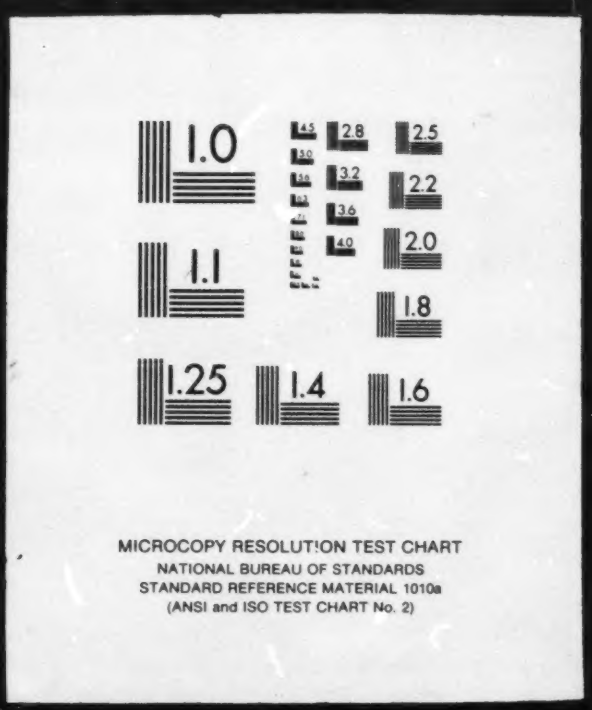
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ABSTRACT

The Race Relations Division of the Ontario (Canada) Human Rights Commission states its primary goal as that of helping the institutional sector of the society to deal with problems of racism and racial discrimination. In order to forward the belief that responsibility for promoting race relations lies with key government agencies and institutions in Ontario society, a conference was held in January 1982, to discuss the promotion of racial harmony and equality within educational systems. This report summarizes the content of the conference. Five major issues are reviewed: (1) assessing and streaming of immigrant and visible minority students; (2) how curriculum can promote positive race relations; (3) developing effective race relations programs for students and teachers; (4) augmenting good school-community relations in a multiracial society; and (5) developing and implementing race relations policies. Conference participants' recommendations are outlined. (GC)

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Ontario Ministry of Labour
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Race Relations Division

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# RACE RELATIONS:

# NEW PERSPECTIVES, NEW DELIVERY SYSTEMS FOR EDUCATION

**Proceedings of the Conference on Race Relations and Education**

**January 28 and 29, 1982**

UD 022 852

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This document contains the Summary and Recommendations Section of the Proceedings of the Conference on Race Relations and Education, "Race Relations: New Perspectives, New Delivery Systems for Education," hosted by the Race Relations Division of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

The Race Relations Division is making this document available to you as part of its commitment to work with all institutions and community groups in Ontario, and to keep them informed periodically about the Division's concerns, priorities, and achievements. In this particular instance, we believe this Conference represents a major cooperative achievement of the educational sector working with the Division, and this document, therefore, of wide interest to educators.

The text of the entire proceedings which includes the address by Dr. Moore of the Council on Interracial Books for Children, the Workshop Reports, the Boards' action reports, the list of delegates, is available from:

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# RACE RELATIONS: NEW PERSPECTIVES, NEW DELIVERY SYSTEMS FOR EDUCATION

Proceedings of the
Conference on Race Relations
and Education

hosted by
The Race Relations Division
Ontario Human Rights Commission
January 28/29, 1982
at Queen's Park, Toronto

## PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Hazel Excell, Board of Education for the Borough of Etobicoke (Alternates: Dennis Pereira, Howard Sammy)

Victor Gallo, York County Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Alba Gillies, Peel Board of Education

Teresa Gonzalez, Metropolitan Separate School Board

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Shiam Tripathi, Board of Education for the Borough of Scarborough

Jack Berryman, Ontario Ministry of Education

Barbara Thomas, Cross-Cultural Communications Centre, Toronto

Kathleen Fraser, Ontario Human Rights Commission (Conference Chairman, July 1981 - December 1981; Conference Report Author)

Doris Stern, Ontario Human Rights Commission (Conference Chairman, January 1, 1982 - January 31, 1982)

Urooj Zaidi, Ontario Human Rights Commission (Conference Secretary)

Susan Ramondt, Executive Assistant to the Race Relations Commissioner

## FOREWORD

"A primary goal of our strategy is to help every institutional sector of our society to develop its own internal capacity for dealing with problems of racism and racial discrimination. The primary responsibility for promoting harmonious race relations lies ultimately with key agencies and institutions in Ontario society, such as in education, law enforcement, employment and governmental services."[1]

It was to forward this cooperative approach that in July of 1981, representatives from boards of education across Metropolitan Toronto and the Regions of Peel and York, and from the Ontario Ministry of Education, met at the request of the Race Relations Division, Ontario Human Rights Commission, to plan a major conference on education and race relations. This important event took as its title "Race Relations: New Perspectives, New Delivery Systems for Education," as an indication that it was time for both a review of past responses of educational institutions to race relations issues, and also for a widespread sharing of emerging new effective strategies.

Underlying the purpose of the Conference was the understanding that positive change and social progress do not come automatically, but rather through planning and purposive initiatives.

The Race Relations Division is pleased to present here the report of the Conference, a report which contains a thorough review of initiatives to date on five major issues affecting race relations, and the collective suggestions of the many delegates to the Conference to promote racial harmony and remove racial disadvantage within educational systems.

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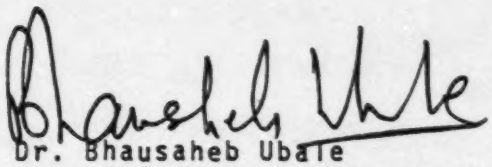
1. "Working Together: Strategy for Race Relations in Ontario," Dr. Bhausaheb Ubale, April 1982, Ontario Human Rights Commission, Summary Statement, p. 1.

The Race Relations Division encourages the educational sector in its continuing efforts to deal with problems of racism and racial discrimination, pledges its continuing active support of such efforts, and calls on society as a whole to join in working cooperatively towards equality of opportunity for all students regardless of racial background.



Dr. Bhausaheb Ubale
Race Relations Commissioner
for the Province of Ontario

May, 1982

## DEFINITIONS

"Since many attempts at problem solving in the area of race and other intergroup relations are often characterized by poor problem diagnosis, it is essential, at the beginning, to clarify the substantive components of our understanding of race relations..."[1]

### Race Relations

"The term 'race relations' refers to the pattern of interaction, in an interracial setting, between people who are racially different...the term has tended to imply harmonious relations, i.e. one race getting along with one another.... Although that may be a valid interpretation, results might be very disappointing if policy responses were established on this assumption alone.

"...Two key components are crucial in any definition of 'race relations' -- racial intolerance arising from prejudicial attitudes based on race and colour, and racial disadvantage arising from the systemic nature of racism."[2]

### Multiculturalism

"...For me, multiculturalism is a positive dynamic force, a philosophy that should permeate all curriculum. It means sharing and building together. It is a philosophy based on the concept that each and all of the diverse cultures now present in our country have something of value to offer -- something to share with other cultures, as together we strive to build a new and better way of living together...a more ideal society."[3]

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1. B. Ubale, op. cit., p. 10.
2. B. Ubale, op. cit., p. 10.
3. "Remarks," Hon. Thomas L. Wells, Minister of Education, at the Conference on "Multiculturalism in Education," sponsored by the Ontario Association for Curriculum Development, Sheraton Centre Hotel, Toronto, Wednesday, April 20, 1977.

Race Relations and Multiculturalism Compared and Contrasted

"Many well-meaning people...are more comfortable with the concept of multiculturalism than they are with race relations...let me outline my perception of the important difference between them. I fear that unless these differences and their significance are understood by the people of this province, the struggle to improve race relations will not gain the clear public support it requires to succeed....

"There are two important aspects of multiculturalism which must be distinguished. The first is multi-culturalism as a fundamental premise of our society ...Canada is built upon the strength and diversity of a great many cultures; as a nation we must...develop and maintain an identity which is enriched by these diverse influences....

"The second aspect of multiculturalism lies in the development of programs to help individual cultural groups maintain their unique heritage.

"Cultural heritage is vital to the long-term viability of our chosen society, but cannot offer immediate solutions to, nor amelioration of, the devastating human consequences of the racism which lies amongst us.

"Only programs which specifically recognize the existence of racism will ever be able to combat it."[4]

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4. "Address," Hon. R. Roy McMurtry, Q.C., Attorney General and Solicitor General of Ontario, Liaison Group on Law Enforcement, Hotel Triumph, Toronto, March 8, 1980.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research shows us clearly that children as early as four years of age already exhibit the racist attitudes of their parents and the community around them. Children entering school understand all too well the dynamics of race in social relationships, and are prepared to act out these dynamics in the school and in the community.* It was within this context that on January 28 and 29, 1982, the Race Relations Commissioner for Ontario, Dr. Bhausaheb Ubale, hosted an invitational conference for educators on the subject of how educational institutions might best contribute to good race relations for the 1980's.

The objectives of the Conference were:

- to identify the best and most appropriate programs and strategies already in place in boards within the greater Metropolitan area;
- to share ideas on how programs and strategies might be improved;
- to develop further a network of individuals committed to good race relations;
- to assist boards of education in their efforts in the race relations field;
- to develop a more coordinated approach to solving race relations problems.

In attendance were 75 individuals selected by their Directors from the eleven Boards of Education constituting the area of Metropolitan Toronto and the regions of Peel and York, and representing a wide range of responsibilities from trustees, supervising officials, consultants, teachers, community liaison workers, and psychologists.

The Conference was planned by a committee comprising a representative from each of the attending boards, the Ministry of Education and staff of the Race

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* "A Cultural Program for Changing Racial Attitudes," Ijaz, M.A. and I.H. Ijaz, in The History and Social Science Teacher, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1981, and "Children and Race," Milner, David, Penguin Books, 1975.

Relations Division, Ontario Human Rights Commission, who identified that the event should concentrate on the five major current issues in meeting the race relations needs of a multiracial Province. These five issues are:

- assessing and streaming of immigrant and visible minority students
- how curriculum can promote positive race relations
- developing effective race relations programs for students and teachers
- augmenting good school-community relations in a multiracial society
- developing and implementing race relations policies

The two-day event was planned so that delegates concentrated on selected workshop topics for the entire Conference, listening to the opening presentations, asking questions, and contributing ideas and expertise.

On the last afternoon representatives met separately with others from their board to pool ideas gained from the five workshops and evolve a plan to improve race relations based on the individual needs of their board.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Robert Moore of the Council on Interracial Books for Children, New York City. The entire text of this outstanding address is reproduced in the proceedings. Dr. Moore called for educators to renew their efforts to improve curriculum now portraying an "all-white" world, to understand the implications of how race has influenced the development of society in Canada and the United States, and emphasized the need to develop "cognitive sophistication" in young people so they can understand how race relations deeply affects their lives, and so they can take a realistic approach to living in a multiracial world.

Evaluations of the Conference indicated that the two-day event had met a definite local need, both in Dr. Moore's challenging speech, and in the five

workgroups. Participants appreciated the opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals across the metropolitan area who are also addressing the requirements of our multiracial community. They were pleased to have an extended length of time to discuss race relations with key individuals within their own boards.

This summary of the Conference does not repeat verbatim the remarks of the workshops, since these discussions are available in the full-length proceedings. Rather, this summary sets out the broad spectrum of opinion on each of the five conference issues in: the workshops, Dr. Moore's speech, plenary session, board final reports, evaluations submitted by delegates and by the committee.

Issue One:

Assessing and Streaming of Immigrant and Visible Minority Students

There are current practices that work against a fair and objective evaluation of immigrant and visible minority students' abilities, practices that appear to affect visible minority students in particular.

- teachers' own culturally determined norms and expectations of children, used as placement criteria

- placements inflexibly permanent, when coupled with assessments carried out too soon after a student's arrival in the system, and assessments by inexperienced testers

- lack of widespread use of professional support of psychologists, social workers, community liaison workers

- parents not involved in an informed way in these far-reaching decisions

- inexperience in cross-cultural and and cross-racial relationships

At present, two boards have a comprehensive team approach to assessment and placement with some or all

of the following elements. In one, the receiving school refers the child to the team which has a multidisciplinary team of psychologist, social worker and community liaison worker. The team tests the child, assigning no score but interpreting the tests in terms of strengths and weaknesses. The child may be tested and the parents consulted in their own mother tongue when necessary for a complete understanding of the process. Data on the child's prior schooling and experiences are collected. Parents' expectations for their child are reviewed by the community liaison worker and any expectations that seem unrealistic in the Canadian context are discussed in detail with them. Finally an individualized program is created, supervised by the teacher and guidance counsellor, and followed up by the team on an ongoing basis. There are future plans to train interpreters in assessment skills. The overall goal is to ease the child gradually into the mainstream of the system.

A second board also takes a preventative approach, all immigrant children being assessed by a Multicultural Community Unit with seven consultants on staff, of West Indian, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Russian, Jewish, Vietnamese and South Asian backgrounds. A team of trained assessment translators cover the languages not available in the Unit, and whose work is supervised by the Unit. The Principal, Guidance Counsellor and parents are notified of results.

Group Discussion

Race relations issues affecting assessment and placement centre in the attitudes of the white majority who, while consciously seeking to be fair and objective, err in not understanding the profound effect of cultural and racial factors. The white majority for the most part see themselves as people, and others as "people of colour." Also, the contributions of other cultures to the world and to Canadian society continue to be ignored or denigrated by the system.

A poor race relations climate within the school often acts as a strong informal streaming process, to the disadvantage of the visible minority student who may see no alternative but to leave the system entirely.

These dynamics and beliefs profoundly affect the relationships of visible minority students and their parents with the Ontario school system.

The workshop participants regarded it as crucial to use bilingual persons in the assessment process, especially useful would be community persons and parents who had been teachers in the student's country of origin. Translation services and the use of persons sensitive to race relations issues are needed for good parent consultations so that parents understand the educational system, feel comfortable in dealing with it, and have confidence that the system is dealing fairly with their children.

Areas where considerably more attention is needed are: small boards see it difficult to have their own teams for assessment and placement. Under these circumstances an E.S.L. program is seen as one of the best present alternatives. The high dropout rates of black students is unacceptable and solutions must be found at the student level; young adults also must be brought back into the educational system into programs appropriate to their needs. Upgrading remains still largely in the domain of community groups struggling with limited resources to fill this urgent requirement.

Recommendations

- that resources available in the community be made available to assessment teams
- that boards inform all parents at length on different program levels, and the skill and job implications of each level
- that assessment be conducted by a qualified interdisciplinary team
- that children be tested as necessary in their mother tongue/dialect
- that adequate data on the child's educational background and personal experiences be assembled
- that placements be initially tentative

- that parents be informed and consulted at each stage of the assessment process, with translation as necessary

- that boards provide information, by way of a study, on the background and placement of all students, racial data to be included

- that boards undertake research to monitor student progress in their assigned programs

- that boards assess to what extent racial backgrounds may affect placement in the educational system

- that the above information be made available to the community

- that the school ensure that assessments and placements be implemented with care within the school.

Issue Two:

How Curriculum Can Promote Positive Race Relations

Presenters worked from the premise that "a distinct contribution to institutional racism is the continuation of a mono-cultural, mono-racial, mono-ethnic curriculum program."* One presentation gave an interesting overview of elements in the possible evolution of curriculum for a multiracial society.

The first stage, Additive, contains supplementary units such as "The West Indian Student." The second, Contributive, promotes the concept of how ethnic and racial groups have made positive contributions to Canada and the world, important significant persons are the subject of study, pride in heritage is developed and reinforced within the school setting as students learn of groups other than their own. The third possible stage, Integrative, implies profound

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* Banks, J.A., "Ethnic Studies: a process of curriculum reform" Social Education, Vol. 40, No. 20, February 1976, pp. 76-80.

changes in that it resides more in new policies, attitudes and techniques. A total change affecting all experiences for all students at all levels, and for all staff, occurs as a result, and in this process the we/they syndrome dividing racial and ethnic groups becomes considerably less important. No one element is responsible for such deep changes in the educational system, instead change is the result of many factors operating together.

A second presentation in the workshop dealt with the huge demands on any professional responsible singly for developing and implementing initiatives in multiculturalism, and by implications race relations, across an entire board. Oviously huge gaps exist in terms of influencing an entire system towards positive race relations. For example, good initiatives to date were materials to identify bias in the curriculum, a teacher guide to "Canada's Multicultural Heritage," and a Language Arts unit using folk tales from around the world. However, these approaches cannot ensure that teachers will use such materials; in any event such materials are not applicable to non-traditional areas such as mathematics and science, which require at this point in time a special effort on the part of teachers already generally trained in and commited to the philosophy of multiculturalism.

Workshop participants commented that it is critical to increase awareness at all levels since heritage and self-concept can be reinforced in after-hours courses and the entire effect eroded the next day when the school curriculum is basically the study of white majority achievements and point of view. When race relations is viewed, not as a series of problems, but as a cooperative and positive opportunity, the resources of parents, the community and other professionals can be tapped towards producing a curriculum appropriate to a racially diverse society. A key concept is the falsity of the dichotomy "basic skills" versus "multiculturalism," since heritage courses help children learn better as their self concepts are enhances.

As well as the more traditional units, other learning strategies appropriate for good race relations are the team approaches entitled "Cooperative Learning" and "Jigsaw." These new methods promote friendships within the learning teams, take such learnings out of an artificial setting and make them real in the schoolyard as well as in the classroom.

There are two serious gaps in curriculum, the time gaps of five years between creating and implementing new materials, the gap between the writers and implementers of curriculum. In the race relations field these gaps may prove to be even more serious.

The issues of racial bias and racial discrimination indicate that both students, teachers and policy makers need training in identifying and analyzing such bias in the print and electronic media, and that students, teachers and policy makers could usefully be empowered to deal locally with the "invisible" curriculum of the school climate, when visible minority students feel less than equal participants.

Recommendations

- that all selected curriculum materials reflect the reality of the multiracial, multicultural nature of Canadian society.

- that guidelines for the identification of racial bias be adopted by boards of education and existing materials be evaluated.

- that new materials be examined for racial bias prior to purchase; new materials seriously address historical issues in race relations, where possible.

- that staff and students learn to identify and analyze racial bias in learning materials and in other sources.

- that curriculum be reformed and reconceptualized so that a new curriculum based on new assumptions and new perspectives is developed.

- that curriculum goals be more consistent with the needs of a global society.

- that schools each develop an action plan to promote a positive climate for learning, and deal with the issue of the "hidden curriculum" of schools.

- that parents and racial and ethnic groups be seriously consulted on the collection of new curriculum materials and in curriculum development.

- that boards develop curriculum to promote "cognitive sophistication" in the area of race relations.

- that boards develop implementation strategies that include: training and inservicing of staff on how to integrate race relations and multiculturalism across the curriculum to the fullest extent.

- that teaching strategies for positive race relations ("Jigsaw," etc.), which run concurrent to curriculum, be adopted.

Issue Three:

Developing Effective Race Relations Programs for Students and Teachers

The workshop participants learned that one Metro board runs an annual three-day residential race relations program for students in grades ten and eleven to teach leadership skills. Used as strategies are cooperative games, role playing, communication exercises and group discussion. The "graduates" of this program have assisted in conducting race relations programs for others such as professional development for teachers. There are 36 board staff responsible overall for the program, hence a widespread commitment to its success exists. Since it is expensive to operate, similar effective programs are being sought.

A second Metro board also conducts a similar program, and has added a research component in the form of a pre-test and post-test. A session is held later, after the residential part of the camp, and deals with multiculturalism and race relations, moral dilemmas, cross-cultural awareness. The "graduates" are

expected to return to the school as an action team, along with their teacher who also attends the camp. Activities carried out subsequently include: international night; buddy system for visible minority students needing support; a roadshow portraying some of the camp activities; a program in race relations for junior school students.

Three other Metro boards run similar retreat programs for students and teachers, all such programs being based on the original format created by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Ontario Human Rights Commission in 1978, and conducted on a yearly basis at the Ministry's centre at Longford Mills.

Other program resources or opportunities available across Metro include: Toronto board's race relations film and slide-tape materials; Toronto board's resource directory of available speakers from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds; workshops for staff organized by multicultural consultants from their own boards.

Workshop participants wondered whether these programs, particularly the residential ones, made any improvements. Those familiar with such programs said the camps resulted in improved leadership skills, peer relationships and even marks. Teachers in particular appreciate the retreat setting as an opportunity to enjoy and listen to people in their various racial and ethnic diversities, and believe the experience is most significant to their professional development in the area of race relations.

Declining enrollment and staff cut-backs are resulting in rising average ages of teachers who took their training in a period when multiculturalism and race relations were not stressed at faculties of education. All staff members, as well as parents and the community-at-large, were seen as needing race relations programs. Since boards now are hiring fewer teachers, the positions of community liaison workers are central to adding race relations capabilities into boards' ongoing efforts.

Workshop participants agreed that racism does exist in society, yet there is widespread denial of this fact since people are uncomfortable with the idea. Any race relations programs must deal sensitively with

these feelings of guilt or denial and encourage the positive reinforcement of mutual respect and cooperation among racial groups.

Inservicing can also be made more effective by the use of videotapes, slide shows and retreats, and more attractive to staff by using half board time and half staff time.

It is particularly urgent with declining enrollment and resultant teacher transfer to multiracial schools that such dislocated staff receive adequate preparation for what may be "culture shock" to them. There must be pre-entry orientation, ongoing opportunities for consultative support, and support by the Principal.

Recommendations

- that Metro and area boards continued to develop and share on a regular basis ideas for creative new race relations programs.

- that programs such as the "Multicultural, Multiracial Leadership Camp" program be widely implemented to improve student-student and student-staff relations, since these programs are one of the best sources of student leadership and staff development.

- that specific teacher training and development programs be created for race relations, particularly in dealing with racial incidents, and making maximum use of the unexpected "teachable moment."

- that boards develop a climate in which true multiculturalism and postive race relations become part of the normal living experience of the school.

Issue Four:

Augmenting Good School-Community Relations in a Multiracial Society

The school must identify a new role for the 1980's in meeting the social needs arising from race relations issues. Although poor race relations may manifest themselves in the school setting, problems are not caused solely by the educational system, but by widespread social patterns and attitudes which may then be reflected in the school environment. For example, violence in the playground may be race related, but caused by tensions picked up in the community-at-large. For these reasons, the school cannot, nor should it, deal in isolation with race relations. All available resources of the community, the school and senior levels of government can join together effectively in promoting positive race relations, and the school's role lies in its resources of leadership.

In order to examine school-community relations in depth, one board's experiences in this area were used to initiate the workshop discussions. This particular board found that in the 70's many children were not achieving in the system, with children from visible minority backgrounds, and from cultural and ethnic backgrounds other than "mainstream," disproportionately represented in the non-achievers group. The trustees in this board wished to respond to these perceived needs, and consequently spearheaded the preparation of one report on multiculturalism and a second on race relations policies. Community groups in particular had a major impact on the development of the board's race relations policies. Cutbacks and other subsequent priorities have jeopardized the widespread implementation of the reports, and the creation of an awareness program for staff, consequently good race relations is not well understood across the board. Unfortunately, "back to basics" has been identified as competing for dollars against multiculturalism and race relations, rather than as serving the same ends.

Community development is crucial in terms of serving a multiracial, multicultural population. The school is uniquely situated with the potential to be a major

resource in community development and adult education, since this particular board area is characterized by low incomes by Metro standards, unemployment, functional illiteracy. Seventy percent of residents do not have children attending school. There is, however, a growing demand for adult day education, particularly as a means to re-enter the work force.

This board's Multi-Year Plan for Community Services might be examined for its relevance to race relations since in school-community relations cooperation among trustees, community groups, senior officers and teachers is one important element for success. Similarly, in race relations, the role of the community might take the following cooperative direction. An ongoing process is necessary whereby people of all races come together to be involved in dialogue, that is, race relations education in its broadest definition. Citizens can be involved in the planning stages, hopefully to work with teachers. At a minimum, parents can be involved in P.D. sessions. The school community worker can be a key individual at this point in reaching out to individuals in the community, in identifying for educators what is really helpful in dealing with race relations situations. For example, developing a race relations policy should be tied to a community issue so that people will come together to speak and arrive at a common sense of purpose. Money is available from senior levels of government for community services, on the condition that the funding goes to an already existing program. It is useful, therefore, to consider tying race relations into ongoing programs such as adult education and community programs.

There are inhibiting factors keeping parents and community isolated from schools -- these are: fear of the school; single parents have little time; support staff have no training in dealing with visitations; language, racial and cultural barriers; ongoing consultative relationships between school and community at the local level are not a usual accepted occurrence. In the board used as the workshop example, each school has a community committee that meets monthly, and a P.R. team consisting of a secretary, caretaker and teacher, that meet monthly to review their role and annually at a board conference of all P.R. teams.

The school alone cannot hope to train students to deal with the real world, therefore it must reach into the community for support. Research has shown that children as early as four years old are well aware of the realities of a racial hierarchy imposed by society, therefore the school has a difficult task ahead of it. If the reaction and backlash currently experienced elsewhere is not to take place in Ontario, an enormous amount of organizing of concerned and interested people and groups must take place, particularly of community and minority parents who have the best interests of their children at heart and who are the school's logical allies in the development of race relations education. These parents are also the obvious ones to work with majority parents who may feel uncomfortable with racial differences, yet who are wanting to understand how race relations issues affect them and have any relevance for them.

Recommendations

- that community approach is an excellent way to deal with promoting race relations, and therefore the community-school concept should incorporate this idea

- that there should be an incentive program with discretionary funds to help schools build good community relations, particularly good race relations, at the local level.

- that there should be more coordination between the Ontario Ministry of Education and other Federal and Ontario Ministries dealing with social issues, race relations being a present priority.

- that the findings of this Conference should be followed up with community groups to broaden their awareness of their role in race relations.

- that the community join their voices to those of boards in the requests for assistance from senior levels of government, in terms of leadership and funding.

- that community be involved in any follow-up conferences or in local follow-up to this Conference.

- that community development in the area of race relations be encouraged and strengthened by local boards.

Issue Five:

Developing and Implementing Race Relations Policies

The workshop on this topic was particularly well attended by boards' supervisory officers and trustees, and had presentations by a representative of the Ontario Ministry of Education and by a board representative. The Ontario government's policies on multiculturalism, and the board's experiences in developing a race relations policy were discussed, with major issues being: is it urgent now to deal with race relations problems in terms of policy development; do all boards across the Province need such policies; does a policy serve mainly to focus attention on problems and make them more severe; is there one best method for boards in developing such policies; what is the position of the Ministry on race relations policy.

The Ministry representative presented a paper he had prepared specifically for the Conference, outlining the initiatives of the Ministry in multiculturalism and race relations. While there are policies and legislation outlining the Ontario government's wide mandate, such as the government's overall policy on multiculturalism and the Ontario Human Rights Code administered by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, within the Education Act itself, which sets out the duties of teachers, principals and school boards, there is no specific mention of either a multicultural or race relations responsibility. References to these responsibilities are included in The Formative Years, for the Primary and Junior Division; certain of the curriculum guidelines, resource guides and support documents also have specific reference points for opportunities for the teaching of respect for the heritage and race of all students. The Report of the Minister of Education (1980-81) ensures the participation of parents in assessment, identification and placement of students, and regular consultations. Special projects and research of the Ministry also assist in promoting good race relations. Currently lacking, however, is a major resource document dealing with the area of race relations. The inclusion in the Education Act of a specific reference to the rights

of minorities, and the undesirability of racist acts, would be a noteworthy piece of legislation to strengthen the efforts of the Ministry on behalf of students of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The board presenting its own policies to the workshop said that the report on race relations, and the extensive resulting implementation process, are the result of seven years of extensive work by the board and its local community groups working cooperatively. Originally, the impetus for the race relations report came from a report on multiculturalism, itself arising out of the realization that half the student population did not have English as a mother tongue. The key elements in the process were: intense trustee interest and support, racial incidents taking place in the community, community groups urging the board to respond to the needs of visible minority students in the system.

A race relations advisor coordinates the implementation of the report, and a committee of the board meets montly to oversee this implementation. Parents have very high expectations of the board in the race relations area. The climate has improved, yet there is still an enormous amount to do.

Representatives of other boards felt that it was difficult to create such policies in boards where 60% of supporters have no children in the school, or when the population is ethnically or racially homogenous. They believe the Ministry has a leadership responsibility in stating its own position on race relations and requiring all boards across the Province to develop their own policies. The experiences of board with policies might be drawn upon and shared.

At the local level, a task force can be effective in introducing changes, if this group maintains a continuing dialogue among trustees, community groups, senior officials, and front-line workers.

Implementation is a major task, requiring sustained interest and energy; for example, such policies must be widely publicized and reaffirmed periodically. Responsibility for implementation must be clearly allocated, with accountability also incorporated

formally. Many resources of people, particularly in the community, are willing and able to assist and advise in the process. An adequate budget is essential to success.

Conference delegates believe that while there is urgency in having local race relations policies, the experience of the presenting board demonstrates that extensive and long-term consultations with community groups, staff and students are needed to develop realistic measures at the local level. Policies do not create problems, and are in fact an aspect of the shared responsibility that the Ministry and local boards have towards all their students.

Recommendations

- that the Ontario Ministry of Education, in its capacity as member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Race Relations, articulate a policy on race relations and set out guidelines for boards across the province.

- that all boards in the province articulate a race relations policy indicating acknowlegment of the multiracial, multicultural realities of Ontario.

- that all boards develop a race relations policy on its expectations of staff behaviour and institutional practices, with enforcement of such policies.

- that, recognizing the "access" and "participation" principles of Ontario's multicultural policy, the Ontario government allocate special funds for translators when the professional services of social workers, psychologists and guidance are required by clients of the educational system.

- that boards participating in the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Conference on Race Relations and Education establish a committee to keep abreast of current developments in race relations.

- that board of education endorse Recommendation #22 of the S.E.R.P. Report dealing with the multicultural needs of secondary education.

- that the Education Act be amended to include reference to the responsibility of boards to positive race relations.

- that the Ontario Ministry of Education write a curriculum guideline document to assist classroom teachers and principals in mounting programs to encourage good race relations in Ontario schools.

- that the Race Relations Division prepare guidelines to assist all boards in dealing with race relations issues.

- that the Race Relations Division continue to monitor race relations initiatives in the educational sector.

## Conclusion

The Race Relations Division of the Ontario Human Rights Commission has been encouraged by the response to this Conference and will continue to work along similar cooperative lines.

Particularly striking at this event was the high quality of professionalism available locally to assist boards in their endeavours to develop race relations initiatives.

In terms of some future conferences, recommendations to the planning committee were as follows:

- that work begun by the Conference be continued by a second such event.
- that similar events be held at the board level.
- that a conference be held for trustees and senior administrators.
- that workshops and retreats be held dealing in even greater depth on the implementation of good programs and strategies.
- that further awareness of race relations issues be carried out within boards and their communities.
- that strategies for educating those uncomfortable with racial differences be developed.